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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 001212

FOR DOD/OS ALAN LIOTTA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/21/2018  
TAG: PTER, KDRG, YM  
SUBJECT: REVIEWING THE ROADMAP OR RETURN OF YEMEN'S GTMO  
DETAINEES

REF: SANAA 1147

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See para. 6.

¶2. (C) On July 20, the Ambassador met with Ammar Saleh, Deputy Director of Yemen's National Security Bureau, to discuss the eleven items that comprise the roadmap for the return of Yemeni detainees in Guantanamo (GTMO), presented initially during the visit of a joint State-DOD delegation on July 1 (reftel). As the Ambassador went through the list, Saleh provided positive feedback and useful suggestions, indicating that the ROYG hopes to have a suitable facility and re-education program in place by early October.

¶3. (C) Saleh reluctantly identified himself as the single person in charge of the program and the "one to blame," at least until the program is up and running and he can hand it over to someone else. In response to a suggestion from the Ambassador that we identify one of the points for immediate action, as a way to generate momentum, he promised a quick turn-around on providing US authorities a comprehensive report on thirteen former detainees returned to Yemen. Saleh further promised to work with the Embassy to identify ten candidates from among extremists already held by the ROYG to enroll in the first run of the rehabilitation program. Saleh made a point of saying that these candidates should pose a real challenge to the ROYG, in order to test their system, and requested that Yemen receive credit for this test rehabilitation class from the USG.

¶4. (C) Saleh agreed to the inclusion of Minister of Religious Guidance and Endowment, Judge Hamoud al-Hitar, in the rehabilitation program, saying, "of course, where else could we get religious scholars?" He proposed hiring retired Political Security Office (PSO) officers to serve as guards, and using prefab buildings to speed up establishment of the initial program. He warned, though, that if detainees were returned before the Yemeni rehabilitation program was up and running (estimated after Eid al-Fitr, i.e., early October) that the returnees would not/not receive rehabilitation and would be held only temporarily in PSO prisons before appearing before a judge, who would almost certainly free them. He identified locating a venue for the rehabilitation camp as a major issue for the ROYG to grapple with, and even solicited suggestions from the Embassy regarding potential locations.

¶5. (C) Saleh asked the Ambassador to deliver recordings of interviews between a ROYG delegation to GTMO and Yemeni detainees conducted during a February visit. These recordings would enable the ROYG to create a prioritized list of those individuals eligible for return based on the level of threat they pose. He also asked for technical assistance for the construction of the facility and monitoring devices, and stated that while the ROYG would finance construction of the initial facility to receive the first 10 detainees, any expansion would depend on USG support.

¶6. (C) Comment and Action Request: Ammar Saleh's expressed reluctance to take on the responsibilities of managing the

GTMO-detainee program notwithstanding, he engaged quite readily in the discussion on particulars, and was candid about where he believes progress can be made, a timeline for steps that can be taken, and where he envisions problems. Certainly, the fact that the ROYG has yet to identify a facility to which a detainee reception center and rehab program can be appended is a cause for some concern, and post will use what we understand is interest on the part of INL to support creation of such a facility as an incentive for the ROYG to move on this issue as quickly as possible. In the meantime, we request that the recordings of the February interviews between ROYG officials and Yemeni nationals at GTMO be provided to Ammar Saleh so that this information can help inform ROYG efforts to assist in the creation of a prioritized list of detainees for return, according to the level of security threat they may pose. End Comment and Action Request.

SECHE